

Message from the Chair

For thousands of years, the Vuntut Gwitchin and its neighbouring Gwich'in Nations have used and managed the land. Our ancestors were highly educated in land use and the management of all resources. Their land use practices were effective. What we take from the Mother Earth, we give thanks for and use with the utmost respect. Our ancestors taught us the most sacred of teachings...not to use or take more than you need and only what Mother Earth or all of Creation can provide. This teaching ensures a sustainable future for generations to come.

In North Yukon, the Porcupine Caribou hold a special place in Gwich'in culture and life. It has been said that the Gwich'in and the Caribou hold a piece of each other's heart. The Creator gave the Gwich'in the Caribou to feed and sustain the people, and to keep the teachings and responsibilities to our past, current and future generations alive. Like the relationship between the Gwich'in people and the Caribou, the Porcupine herd holds a special place in this land use plan.

The Vuntut Gwitchin are a resourceful people and will not shy away from economic opportunities. However, the teachings of our ancestors resonate with each land use issue we are engaged in, and with each decision we must make. Vuntut Gwitchin Elders have been consulted throughout this process to gather, document and map important traditional use and wildlife areas. Their knowledge is represented directly in the North Yukon land use plan.

We have been taught to do things in co-operation with others. The Plan Partners concept initiated from the beginning of this exercise embraces this teaching. Our intent has been to develop a regional land use plan for the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory with cooperation and engagement of our Plan Partners. The end result is a Plan that reflects the values of residents, is balanced, assists in making informed land use decisions, and can be implemented. A special Mahsi` Choo (thank you) to our Plan Partners.

Our staff worked extremely hard to produce this Plan. Their skills, energy, dedication and commitment throughout this long and challenging planning process was a source of inspiration for the Commission members. Thank you to Shawn Francis, John Ryder, Richard Vladars and Kathleen Zimmer. We couldn't have done this without you.

The North Yukon regional land use plan embodies the guiding principles of the Vuntut Gwitchin people – *Nichih Gwanal'in, Looking Forward*. We trust this land use plan will assist in establishing a framework for sustainable land use in northern Yukon.

Mahsi` Choo,



Shirlee Frost, Chair
North Yukon Planning Commission